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# Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4450

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, LE, SY
SUBJECT: GOL INTERIOR MINISTER ON PROPOSALS TO STOP
BEIRUT SHELLING

1. DURING CALL ON GOL INTERIOR MINISTER SALMAN AUG 3 TO INTRODUCE DCM, I ASKED SALMAN ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR ENDING THE CURRENT EXCHANGES OF GUNFIRE BETWEEN THE CHRISTIANS AND THE SYRIANS IN BEIRUT. SALMAN REPLIED THAT IF THE CURRENT MEETINGS BETWEEN THE GOL AND KHADDAM DO NOT PRODUCE SOME FORM OF AGREEMENT, HE WOULD BE VERY PESSIMISTIC. I SUGGESTED THAT ONE SOLUTION WOULD BE TO INTRODUCE THE LEBANESE ARMY INTO THE CONFRONTATION AREAS TO DEAL WITH PROVOCATIVE FIRING AND WORK OUT ARRANGEMENTS FOR REDUCING THE AMOUNT OF WEAPONS HELD IN THESE AREAS.

2. SALMAN SAID THIS IDEA WAS THEORETICALLY VERY SOUND BUT IMPRACTICAL ON SEVERAL GROUNDS. IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE SYRIANS WOULD NOT AGREE TO IT, SINCE IT WOULD IMPLY
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SYRIAN CULPABILITY FOR THE INCIDENTS WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE, AND THUS CAUSE AN UNACCEPTABLE LOSS OF FACE FOR THEM. SECONDLY, SALMAN SAW NO VALUE IN A SIMULATED LIMITATION OF ARMS IN WHICH MACHINE GUNS WERE SIMPLY MOVED OFF THE STREET INTO HOUSES. THERE HAD TO BE SOME REAL DISARMAMENT. THERE HAD TO BE A PACKAGE DEAL, AND THAT WAS HARD TO ARRANGE.

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3. SALMAN SAID IN HIS VIEW THE PLACE TO START WAS ON IMPROVEMENT OF LEBANESE-SYRIAN COORDINATION. SYRIAN CONTROL OF THEIR FORCES IS HIGHLY CENTRALIZED IN DAMASCUS, WHERE THE SITUATION IN BEIRUT IS NOT FULLY UNDERSTOOD. SINCE THERE IS NO CENTRAL SYRIAN REPRESENTATION IN BEIRUT AND THE COMMANDER OF THE SYRIAN FORCES IN LEBANON IS UNDER A TIGHT LEASH, GOL APPROACHES TO THE SYRIANS ON THE SHOOTING ARE CUMBROUSLY CONVEYED THROUGH THE TOP LEVEL OF THE GOL TO THE TOP LEVEL OF THE GOS. WHAT IS NEEDED, SALMAN WENT ON, IS A JOINT SYRIAN-LEBANESE COMMITTEE WHICH WOULD MEET EVERY MORNING IN THE BEIRUT AREA AND ATTEMPT TO SOLVE PROBLEMS AS THEY ARISE.

4. COMMENT: SALMAN'S PROPOSAL SOUNDS LIKE A PRACTICAL STEP FORWARD WHICH SHOULD BE TRIED OUT ON AN URGENT BASIS. THEY SYRIAN COMMANDER IN LEBANON, ALI ASLAM, HAS APPARENTLY REMAINED A SOMEWHAT INACCESSIBLE AND SHADOWY FIGURE. IT COULD HELP MATTERS IF HE OR AT LEAST SOME OF HIS SENIOR OFFICERS WERE DRAWN INTO REGULAR FACE-TO-FACE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES WHO ARE HANDLING SECURITY MATTERS ON THE SPOT (I.E., WITH INTERNAL SECURITY OFFICIALS AND NOT JUST SAMI KHATIB, TITULAR COMMANDER OF ADF).
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# Message Attributes

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